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ABSTRACT

The Intertribal Wordpath Society is a nonprofit educational corporation formed to promote the teaching, status, awareness, and use of Oklahoma Indian languages. The Society produces "Wordpath," a weekly 30-minute public access television show about Oklahoma Indian languages and the people who are teaching and preserving them. The show aims to raise the consciousness and appreciation of the general public for Indian languages; to share information by announcing classes, conferences, and grants and by demonstrating teaching methodologies and technologies; to create language materials for classrooms and archives; and to honor language preservationists, including teachers and students. A typical studio show is an interview between the producer and one or more guests. The guests may tell about their personal background, why their language is important to them, and dates and times of language classes. Often they sing a song or tell a story in their language (segments that can be used in classes). Sometimes shows are taped on location at a university, school, or community language class or in a guest's home. Periodically, the producer does a solo show on a linguistic topic. The program crew is about 60 percent Oklahoma Indian and includes both novices and experts in video production. The program has benefited the general public, persons interested in language preservation, teachers, students, and crew members. Appendices list the 32 Wordpath shows to date and 17 planned shows. (Author/SV)

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The Wordpath Show

Alice Anderton

The Intertribal Wordpath Society (IWS) is a nonprofit educational corporation formed to promote the teaching, status, awareness, and use of Oklahoma Indian languages. The Society produces Wordpath, a weekly 30 minute public access television show about Oklahoma Indian languages and the people who are teaching and preserving them. There are cable television companies all across the United States that offer some form of public access. The Federal Communications Commission requires cable companies to make their facilities and airwaves available to the public in exchange for having a monopoly on the cable in their local area. This public access may involve the right to air programs on a certain channel during certain hours; it may also involve the right to use studio facilities to produce programs. This access is offered for a low fee or no fee. This paper describes IWS use of public access television to promote Oklahoma's indigenous languages.

In Norman, Oklahoma, the local cable company, Multimedia Cablevision, supports an active program that truly serves the community and is completely free. The program is called *Wordpath*, and it is a part of the Community Producers Workshop. Any Norman resident aged 18 or over can join the Workshop by taking a free training class at the studio which lasts a few hours and gives an overview of the facilities and the Workshop. At the end of the class, participants get a "Community Producer" (CP) card that entitles them to serve on the crews of existing community programs and use the studio's facilities to produce a new program of their own under the supervision of studio staff. Further training and certification are available from studio staff in electronic field production (remote shoots) and editing.

Community Producers can use a professional television studio equipped with sound and lighting systems, graphics computers, an audio board, a video switching board, and a digital video effects machine, as well as dubbing and editing bays. Once certified, CPs may check out equipment to shoot programs at remote sites; this includes a high quality Hi-8 camera, microphones, and lighting equipment. The resulting programs air on the local cable channel only, which reaches 20,000 households in the Norman area. Shows may also be distributed for nonprofit purposes (some are broadcast in other areas in their public access programs). No production for commercial purposes is allowed.

I joined the Community Producers Workshop in 1995 with no video experience whatever, and began serving on the crew of some of the existing shows to develop my skills. I began as a cameraperson and went on to do floor manag-

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ing, audio, computer graphics, and directing. When I felt ready, I began to produce *Wordpath*.

Goals of the *Wordpath* show

We have produced 32 shows so far (see Appendix A), and recently received funding from the Oklahoma Foundation for the Humanities and the Endangered Language Fund to produce another 17 (see Appendix B). The goals of the program are:

- to raise the consciousness and appreciation of the general public for Indian languages
- to share information by announcing classes, conferences, and grants and by demonstrating methodologies and technologies
- to create language materials for classrooms and archives
- to honor language preservationists—including teachers and students

Eventually, we hope to tape about 75 programs, including at least one for each of the 27 Oklahoma Indian languages still spoken or being revived. Our Oklahoma Foundation for the Humanities grant will allow us to copy programs and place them in four libraries around the state of Oklahoma, so that people outside Norman or without cable will be able to see them.

The structure of the *Wordpath* show

We shoot in the studio on Thursday evenings (except when taping a show at a remote location). Our shows then air the following week. I have taped a one minute introduction over which we roll the show title and opening credits and a one minute "outro" over which we roll closing credits (personnel, copyright information, and so forth). A typical studio show is essentially an interview between one or more guests and me. We may begin with a few announcements, and then I introduce the guests. I always ask them how one greets someone in their language. Then they tell about their personal background and why their language is so important to them. If they are involved in classes, I give them an opportunity to give dates and times. Often guests will tell a story or sing a song in their language (these segments can be used in classes later). Sometimes we tape a program on location, such as at a university, public school, or community language class or in a guest's home or other location of their choice. In these cases, I edit the tape myself and usually add a brief introduction shot in the studio. The guests receive a copy of the completed show. Periodically I do a solo show on a linguistic topic, such as the structure of a particular language or the commonalties of languages, such as borrowing, language families, teaching methods, and so forth.

Our crew consists of other CPs who have taken the introductory class at the studio and have an interest in the show. I have made a special effort to recruit Native Americans, especially targeting Oklahoma Indian tribes. I use announcements and fliers to Indian language classes at the University of Okla-

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homa, Indian art galleries, and newspaper publicity in the hope that some of these recruits will go on to produce programs in their own communities. Right now our crew is about 60% Oklahoma Indian and includes both novices and experts in video production.

In the future, we will experiment with some more innovative formats. Our Endangered Language Fund grant is to develop two mini-dramas in Indian languages. We plan to have native speakers of Oklahoma Indian languages plan, write, and act minidramas that will fit into our 1/2 hour slot. One will be in Creek and one in Choctaw. We will include a subtitled version in the *Wordpath* broadcast and make both the subtitled and unsubtitled versions available to the participants' tribes and to public libraries in their areas. We hope this will inspire more Oklahomans to make language tapes entirely in their tribal languages, both for the entertainment of fluent speakers and for use in language classes.

Why do this?

We feel good about the response to the *Wordpath* programs so far. Based on comments from the public, I believe that people in Norman are becoming more aware and appreciative of Indian languages. The show has also been very satisfying and educational for me; I have met a lot of people from all over the state who are involved in Indian language work. They peeked in on classes in Indian languages and gained a deeper understanding of the connections between language and culture. The guests have enjoyed being on the show and having the tape afterwards to share with family, friends, and students. Some of the stories we have recorded during *Wordpath* shows have been used to enhance language classes. I think the television experience has helped to build the self-confidence of some of the newer teachers. Students have felt good when they saw themselves on the program, and their family and friends have been proud of them. Our crew has benefited by receiving free technical training and by the contacts they have made with each other and with the guests. At least one crew member has gone on to use her skills producing a cultural program in her own community. Teachers have enjoyed seeing their colleagues' shows, and getting ideas they may use in their own classrooms. And, we have all had a lot of fun with the productions, so everyone has benefited.

I urge all of you to look into the possibilities of doing language video tapes in your own communities. If you live in a small rural community without a cable company, see if there is someone in your tribe who is working or studying in an urban area that has a public access cable program. It is a good, inexpensive way to produce teaching materials, honor fluent speakers and teachers, and make the public aware of the importance and the beauty of Indian languages. For more information, please contact the Intertribal Wordpath Society, 1506 Barkley St., Norman, OK 73071; Phone (405) 447-6103.

Appendix A

Wordpath Shows To Date

1. Introduction. Current statistics on the languages of Oklahoma; language suppression; what's going on in Indian language preservation; language and culture; available books.
2. Bobby Blossom, with Onita Lynch. Cherokee language, classes, and materials, including poetry by Cherokee students at the University of Oklahoma.
3. Linda Alexander and Ted Isham. Creek language, classes, and materials; the story of how turtle got the pattern on its back; the Mvskoke Language Institute.
4. Richard Codopony. Reflections on the importance of the Comanche language, by a Comanche artist who is an independent language scholar.
5. Ronald Red Elk. The President of the Comanche Nation Language and Cultural Preservation Committee and Assistant Principal of Anadarko High School discusses the importance of the Comanche language and recent efforts in the tribe to preserve it.
6. *Wordpath* to Date. A discussion by the producer of the experience of producing the first five shows, and feedback received so far.
7. Truman Black, Otoe, with Arthur Lightfoot. The status and importance of the Otoe language; songs in Otoe.
8. Geraldine Greenwood (part 1). Interview on the suppression of Indian languages by the federal government; visit to Chickasaw language classes at Mill Creek School.
9. Geraldine Greenwood, (part 2). Class presentations by students at Mill Creek School. Reminiscences of growing up Chickasaw in Oklahoma.
10. Mary Lou Davis and Randlett Edmonds. Caddo language, songs, and pottery.
11. Carl Downing, Ph.D. Indian language preservation in Oklahoma.
12. Borrowings (Alice Anderton). How cultural contact is reflected in linguistic borrowing between European and Indian languages, and also from one Indian language to another.
13. George Bunny, Ted Isham, and Pete Coser. Interviews and a visit to a beginning Creek language class in Stillwater.
14. Margaret Mauldin, with Ester Bell and Teri Longhorn. Description of a Creek story book project; reading of the story in Creek and English; Creek hymns. (Taped on site at North Rock Creek School, Shawnee, and Arbeka Indian Methodist church near Okmulgee.)
15. Teaching Myths and Methodologies (part I) (Alice Anderton). How children and adults learn language; what makes a good language class.

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16. Evans Ray Satepauhoodle. The importance of the Kiowa language; recently produced Kiowa language workbook and manual; Kiowa song.
17. Language Teaching Methodologies (part 2). Continues show #15. Includes excerpts of a tape of a Hawaiian immersion classroom.
18. Margaret Mauldin (part 2). Continues show #14. Creek I and Creek II classes at the University of Oklahoma; the preservation of Creek hymns and story; a recording session in a Norman studio.
19. Parrish Williams with John Williams. The importance of the Ponca language; a tour of Ponca country; language and the Native American Church.
20. Lucille McClung. Reminiscences of a Comanche childhood; sample language lesson using a Comanche doll; excerpt of the tape "A Comanche Story".
21. Norman Kiker and Walter Cooper. Status of the Potawatomi language; visit to a Potawatomi class.
22. Indian Languages are not Primitive Languages—Comanche (part 1) (Alice Anderton). A profile of the sounds and grammar of Comanche.
23. Gus Palmer, Jr. Kiowa language classes at the University of Oklahoma; a Kiowa story.
24. Chief Jerry Haney. Seminole language preservation; Mvskoke language at the Seminole Nation Days celebration; newly produced Seminole learning materials.
25. Indian Languages are not Primitive Languages—Comanche (part 2). Continues show #22. Structure of Comanche nouns, verbs, postpositional phrases, and sentences.
26. Greetings in the Indian Languages of Oklahoma (Alice Anderton). A sampling of greetings from Indian and other languages; a theory of greeting form and function, illustrated by examples from Oklahoma languages.
27. Creating Classroom Materials. Making wordlists, flashcards, dictionaries, and posters; demonstration of how to use them in the classroom.
28. Creating Classroom Materials (part 2): Making and using calendars, posters, dialogs, and tapes for the language classroom; excerpt from the Yokuts tape *How Coyote Stole the Sun*; Comanche materials for teachers and students, made by Melissa Hinkle.
29. Hawai'i's Punana Leo Schools. Elementary school language immersion classes in Hawai'i illustrate successful teaching strategies. Stresses the importance of bringing elders into the classroom, combining language and culture, and making learning fun.
30. Alecia Gonzales. Kiowa classes at Anadarko High School. The students introduce themselves in Kiowa, sing Kiowa songs, and discuss stories, grammar, and related culture.
31. Bobby Joe Blossom and Linda Jordan. Cherokee classes at the University of Oklahoma; discussion of Cherokee greetings; an all-Cherokee monolog, followed by the same monolog with simultaneous English translation.
32. Fundraising for Language Programs. How funding can help language programs; who has money to offer; how to plan fundraising and get funded.

Appendix B

Planned *Wordpath* Shows

1. The language families of Oklahoma (Anderton). A brief discussion of the language families of the world and the 8 language families and one isolate (Euchee) of Oklahoma.
2. Indian languages are not primitive languages: Structure of Caddo (Anderton)
3. Boarding schools. We will visit the sites of several surviving schools, discuss their history, and hear the thoughts of several Oklahoma Indians who have good and bad memories of them.
4. Pan-tribal communication, language attitudes, ethnic identity, and language policy. A panel will discuss how their language attitudes are related to practical matters and to issues of ethnic identity and the need for political power in the modern world.
5. Wyandotte and Eastern Shawnee Language Preservation. TeNona Kuhn.
6. Seneca Language Preservation. TeNona Kuhn, of the Cultural Preservation Committee.
7. Peoria, Modoc, and Miami Language Preservation.
8. Chief Charles Dawes, principal chief and a ceremonial leader of the Ottawa tribe and author of a 1982 dictionary of the Ottawa language.
9. Durbin Feeling, author of *Cherokee-English Dictionary* and linguist for the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.
10. Lucy Blalock and Jim Rementer. Delaware.
11. Indian languages are not primitive languages: Choctaw. Dr. Marcia Haag.
12. Marcia Haag and Henry Willis, Choctaw teaching team at the University of Oklahoma.
13. Archiving language materials. Tips for making and storing audio and video tapes and photographs for use in the language classroom.
14. Ponca women's speech.
15. Clara Brown, Caddo.
16. A minidrama in Choctaw.
17. A historical minidrama in Creek.

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